Operation (Unintelligible)

Post 5/2/74

In these transcripts, portions not relevant to my knowledge or actions with regard to Watergate are not included but everything that is relevant is included — the rough as well as the smooth . . . As far as what the President personally knew and did with regard to Watergate and the coverup is concerned, these materials — together with those already made available — will tell it all.

—President Nixon, in his televised address on Tuesday night.

PRESIDENT: What in the world—what in the name of God was Ehrlichman having something (*unintelligible*) in the Ellsberg (*unintelligible*)?

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Dean: If I have one liability in Sullivan here, it is his knowledge of the earlier (*unintelligible*) that occurred here.

President: That we did?

Dean: That we did.

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Dean: Something is going to break and—

President: It will look like the President—

Dean: is covering up—

President: Has covered up a huge (*unintelligible*)—

Dean: That's correct.

Haldeman: But you can't (*inaudible*).

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President: Well, I will get Haldeman in here now.

Dean: Bob and I have talked about it, just as we are talking about it this morning. I told him I thought that you should have the facts and he agrees. Of course, we have some tough problems down the road if we—(*inaudible*). Let me say (*unintelligible*). How do we handle all (*unintelligible*) who knew all about this in advance? Let me have some of your thoughts on that.

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President: They put that under the cover of a Cuban committee, I suppose?

Dean: Well, they had a Cuban committee and they had—some of it was given to Hunt's lawyer, who in turn passed it out. You know, when Hunt's wife was flying to Chicago with $10,000 she was actually, I understand after the fact now, was going to pass that money to one of the Cubans—to meet him in Chicago and pass it to somebody there.

President: (*Unintelligible*) but I would certainly keep that cover for whatever it is worth.

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Dean: That is what really troubles me. For example, if it starts breaking, and they do find a criminal case against a Haldeman, Dean, a Mitchell, an Ehrlichman? That is—

President: If it really comes down to that, we would have to (*unintelligible*) some of the men.

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President: The only thing you could do with him [Hunt] would be to parole him like the (*unintelligible*) situation. But you couldn't buy clemency.

Dean: Kleindienst has now got control of the Parole Board, and he said to tell me we could pull paroles off now where we couldn't before. So—

Haldeman: Kleindienst always tells you that, but I never believe it.

President: Paroles—let the (*unintelligible*) worry about that.

Dean: Once we start down any route that involves the criminal justice system, we've got to have full appreciation that there is really no control over that. While we did an amazing job of keeping us in on the track before while the FBI was out there, and that was the only way they found out where they were going—

President: But you've got to (*unintelligible*).

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Dean: What I have been trying to conceive of is how we could lay out everything we know in a way that we have told the grand jury or somebody else, so that if a Hunt blows, so what's new? It's already been told to a grand jury and they found no criminal liability and they investigated it in full. We're sorry fellow—And we don't, it doesn't—

President: (*Unintelligible*) for another year.

Dean: That's right.

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Haldeman: . . . John's point is exactly right. The erosion here now is going to you, and that is the thing that we have to turn off at whatever cost . . .

President: Well, the erosion is inevitably going to come here, apart from anything and all the people saying well the Watergate isn't a major issue. It isn't. But it will be. It's bound to. (*Unintelligible*) has to go out. Delaying is the great danger in the White House area. We don't, I say that the White House can't do it. Right?

Dean: Yes, sir.

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Moral: Any member of the House Judiciary Committee who is prepared to place full faith in transcripts of recordings of presidential conversations, transcribed and edited by the White House, without the benefit of any effort by experts to inspect the tapes and attempt to retrieve (*inaudible*) and (*unintelligible*) passages, is an (*expletive deleted*).